

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 05943 01 OF 02 051645Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----027752 051649Z /46

O 051530Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2972
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 5943

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PROG, MARR, UNSC, LE, IS, XF

REF: A) STATE 112328; B) STATE 112330; C) JERUSALEM 1128;
D) TEL AVIV 4871

1. SUMMARY: WEIZMAN HAS BEEN WELL BRIEFED ON DISCUSSION
BETWEEN BEGIN AND SECRETARY CONCERNING SOUTHERN
LEBANON AND REQUIREMENT FOR CONCRETE WITHDRAWAL DATE.
I RESTATED BEGIN'S COMMITMENT FOR A CONCRETE WITHDRAWAL
DATE. ISRAELIS ARE PLEASED WITH SOME UNIFIL PERFORMANCE
(FRANCE) AND DISSATISFIED WITH SOME (NORWAY). WEIZMAN
BROUGHT UP SEVERAL COMPLICATING FACTORS, INCLUDING
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SHIA AS WELL AS CHRISTIAN NEIGHBORS ON BORDER, BUT
ADMITTED REQUIREMENT FOR TOTAL WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT
EVER EXPRESSING WHEN. I THINK HE IS RELUCTANTLY READY
TO ACCEPT BEGIN'S ASSURANCES TO SECRETARY AS THE NAME
OF THE GAME HE WILL HAVE TO PLAY. MY ARMA IS NOT SO SURE.
END SUMMARY.

2. I MET WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE WEIZMAN ON 4 MAY AND CARRIED OUT INSTRUCTIONS REF A. DEPUTY MINISTER ZIPPORI AND COL TEHILA WERE WITH HIM. COL WILLIAMS ACCOMPANIED ME. AN OBVIOUSLY TIRED AND SOMEWHAT DISTRAUGHT WEIZMAN HAD ANTICIPATED THIS PURPOSE AND HAS ALREADY DONE HIS HOMEWORK ON WHAT HAD TRANSPIRED DURING THE MEETING BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER BEGIN AND THE SECRETARY.

3. I BEGAN BY ASKING HOW THE SITUATION IN SOUGHERN LEBANON APPEARED TO HIM. WEIZMAN RESPONDED BY DESCRIBING THE MOST RECENT IDF WITHDRAWAL AS "PERFECT, BUT RESULTING IN A VACUUM." HE REFERRED TO A 10-15 KM GAP BETWEEN THE PRESENT IDF LINE AND THE UNIFIL POSITIONS, PARTICULARLY THE SITUATION IN THE TIBNIN AREA WHERE VERY FEW U.N. SOLDIERS ARE STATIONED AND THOSE WHO ARE THERE ARE MAINTENENCE RATHER THAN ENFORCEMENT TROOPS.

4. HE WAS MIXED IN HIS OPINION AS TO HOW UNIFIL WAS ACCOMPLISHING ITS TASKS. HE PRAISED THE FRENCH FOR THEIR EXPERIENCE AND APPARENT DETERMINATION BUT CRITICIZED THE NORWEGIANS SEVERAL TIMES FOR BEING WEAK AND NOT WILLING TO DO THE JOB. HE DESCRIBED THE SITUATION IN TYRE AS "QUIET, BUT RATHER TENSE," IN THE WAKE OF THE SERIOUS FIGHT BETWEEN FRENCH AND PALESTINIANS, WITH THE FATAH SAYING THEY WOULD TRY TO MAINTAIN THE CEASEFIRE AND THE REJECTIONISTS DOING
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THIER USUAL THING - IGNORING ARAFAT AND BREAKING THE CEASEFIRE.

5. WEIZMAN HAD TOURED THE NEW IDF POSITIONS ON WEDNESDAY AND HAD "HAPPENED TO RUN INTO SIILASVUO" IN NAQURA. THE SAYS SIILASVUO ISN'T SURE WHEN HE WILL GET MORE TROOPS AND IS ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THE VACUUM BETWEEN UNIFIL POSITIONS AND THE IDF. WITHOUT PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OF THE VANCE-BEGIN CONVERSATION (REF B), HE HAD ARRANGED A MEETING BETWEEN EITAN AND SIILASVUO FOR NEXT WEEK AT WHICH FURTHER WITHDRAWALS WOULD BE DISCUSSED. (WE ASSUME THIS IS THE MEETING REFERRED TO BY REF C). WEIZMAN, IN RESPONSE TO MY INSISTENCE THAT A CONCRETE DATE FOR WITHDRAWAL WAS REQUIRED SOONEST IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN SUPPORT OF THE TROOP CONTRIBUTORS, POINTED OUT THAT FRANCE, DESPITE WHAT THE SECRETARY HAD TOLD BEGIN, HAD DECIDED ON ANOTHER 500 TROOPS WITHOUT ISRAEL HAVING ESTABLISHED A DATE FOR WITHDRAWAL. I TOLD HIM AT THIS POINT WE WERE MORE CONCERNED WITH THE FRENCH (AND OTHER) WILLINGNESS TO STAY UNLESS WE GET A DATE VERY SOON AND THAT BEGIN HAD ACCEPTED THIS. WEIZMAN CONCEDED A DATE WAS OF SOME IMPORTANCE, BUT DID NOT

GIVE THE IMPRESSION HE CONSIDERS IT CRITICAL. IN ANY
EVENT HE SAID HE WAS NOW "WAITING FOR THE PRIME
MINISTER TO RETURN AND WE WILL DISCUSS IT FURTHER."

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6. WEIAMAN THEN INSISTED "I WANT TO FIND A WAY TO GET
OUT - TO REALLY GET OUT- BUT, THERE ARE CERTAIN THINGS
THAT MUST HAPPEN." HE REFERRED TO: A. A NON-PRESENCE
OF A PLO THREAT SOUTH OF THE LITANI; AND, B. SAFETY OF
"OUR

DEAR FRIENDS" ALONG THE BORDER. INTERESTINGLY
ENOUGH, HE FIRST REFERRED TO SHIA'S, NOT CHRISTIANS.
HE DID ADD THAT HE HAD MET WITH SHIDDIAC ON WEDNESDAY
AND THAT BOTH SHIDDIAC AND HADDAD WERE "BEHAVING
THEMSELVES," BUT THAT HADDAD IS COMPLAINING ABOUT
THE INEFFECTIVENESS OF THE NORWEGIAN UNIFIL TROOPS.

7. AS HE IS INCLINED TO DO, WEIZMAN THEN STARTED
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PHILOSOPHIZING. "WE HAVE BEEN LEBANESING EACH OTHER FOR ALMOST A YEAR." HE ADMITTED IT IS IN THE INTEREST OF BOTH THE GOI AND THE USG THAT "THE ESSENCE OF 425 (UN RESOLUTION) BE IMPLEMENTED TO INCLUDE THE KEY POINTS OF (IDF) WITHDRAWAL PLUS PEACE AND QUIET; HOWEVER (HE QUALIFIED), EVENTS HAVE NOW CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED THE IMPOTENCE OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. "FOR MONTHS WE HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT LEBANESE BATTALIONS MOVING SOUTH; UNFORTUNATELY, IT WAS ONLY HOT AIR." HE SAID THAT EVEN WALDHEIM "WITH WHOM I WAS PLEASANTLY SURPRISED," WAS DISAPPOINTED WITH THE LEBANESE PERFORMANCE. HE THEN SAID THAT TIME IS NOT THE ONLY FACTOR EFFECTING AN IDF TOTAL WITHDRAWAL, AND ADDED THAT THE EFFICIENCY OF THE GOL IN ESTABLISHING A PRESENCE IS ALSO A REQUIREMENT INFLUENCING THE EQUATION. OUR DISCUSSION ON THIS SUBJECT ENDED WITH A RETURN TO HIS EARLIER LINE - "WE SHALL WAIT FOR BEGIN TO RETURN AT WHICH TIME WITHDRAWAL WILL BE DISCUSSED."

8. DURING OUR MEETING WEIZMAN SHOWED US HIS TACTICAL MAP OF SOUTHERN LEBANON. THE IDF SYMBOLS DISPLAYED INDICATE THE AREA OCCUPIED BY THE IDF IS UNDER THE COMMAND AND CONTROL OF NORTHERN COMMAND (MAJ GEN BEN-GAL) WITH TWO BRIGADES, THE 300TH IN THE WEST, AND THE 1ST (GOLANI) IN THE CENTRAL AND NORTHEASTERN SECTORS. THE COUNT WAS TEN INFANTRY COMPANIES ON LINE WITH THREE TANK COMPANIES AND ONE TANK PLATOON BACKING UP. ARTILLERY AND ENGINEER UNITS COMPLETE THE TACTICAL FORCES. OUR ESTIMATE IS, THEREFORE, THAT A TOTAL OF 3-4 INFANTRY BATTALIONS AND ONE TANK BATTALION, PLUS AN ENGINEER BATTALION (REINFORCED) AND 2-3 ARTILLERY BATTALIONS ARE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. THE TOATL NUMBER OF TROOPS IS ESTIMATED AT BETWEEN 3000
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AND 3500, PLUS LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FROM BASES INSIDE ISRAEL. THE NEW LINE OF ISRAELI PRESENCE IN SOUTHERN LEBANON NOW RUNS ALONG THE 33 DEGREE TEN MINUTE LATITUDE LINE BEGINNING AT AL BAYYADAH, RUNNING EAST TO WADI AS SALUQI, NORTH ALONG THE WADI TO TWO (2) KM NORTH OF BANI HAYYAN, EAST TO AL UDAYSAH AND THEN NORTH AND EAST AROUND THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVE OF MARJ UYUN. THE IDF HAS BROKEN THIS AREA INTO THREE SUB-GROUPINGS. CHRISTIAN ONE - FROM THE SEA TO YARUN. SHIA - FROM YARUN TO JUST NORTH OF HULA. CHRISTIAN TWO - NORTH FROM THE PRECEEDING LINE TO INCLUDE THE MARJ UYUN AREA.

THE POPULATION IN THE AREA (NUMBER NOT YET ESTABLISHED)
ROUGHLY BREAKS DOWN TO 70 PCT SHIA, 30 PCT CHRISTIAN.

9. COMMENT: I CAME AWAY WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT
WEIZMAN, DESPITE SOME RHETORIC, IS
RELUCTANTLY READY TO ACCEPT FACT THAT BEGIN HAS COMMITTED
HIMSELF AND THE GOI TO A CONCRETE WITHDRAWAL DATE IN
THE NOT SO DISTANT FUTURE AND IS RESIGEND TO THE
CONCLUSION THAT THE TIME HAS COME TO GET OUT. COL WILLIAMS
DOES NOT AGREE. HE THINKS WEIZMAN WAS ONLY MARKING
TIME AND BLOWING SOME SMOKE ACROSS OUR FRONT, STALLING
AND TAKING FULL ADVANTAGE OF BEGIN'S ABSENCE. HE
THINKS WEIZMAN, BY REFERRING THE THE VACUUM, TO THE
UNFORTUNATE FRENCH EXPERIENCE IN TYRE, TO "OUR SHIA
FRIENDS" (MUCH LESS THE CHRISTIANS), AND THE IMPOTENCE
OF THE GOL, WAS SERVING NOTICE THAT THE GOI IS GOING
TO PLACE SOME STRICT CONDITIONS ON FINAL WITHDRAWAL -
CONDITIONS THAT SIMPLY CANNOT BE MET GIVEN THE CURRENT
CIRCUMSTANCES. THE ONLY THING NOT MENTIONED
BY WEIZMAN DURING THIS MEETING WAS THE GOOD FENCE, AND
WILLIAMS BELIEVES THAT ENOUGH HIGH CARDS HAD BEEN
SHOWN - NO TRUMP WAS REQUIRED. I HOPE HIS IS WRONG -
AS I SAID TO WEIZMAN WHEN THE DISUCCION ENDED -
"LETS KEEP OUR FINGERS CROSSED."

LEWIS
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